

ELLEN G. WHITE

AND

THE JEWS

AN INTERPRETATIVE ANALYSIS OF HER WRITINGS  
AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR OUR TIME



Jacques Doukhan

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## KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

E.G. White's books cited:

AA	-	The Acts of the Apostles
COL	-	Christ's Object Lessons
DA	-	The Desire of Ages
EW	-	Early Writings
GC	-	The Great Controversy
MH	-	The Ministry of Healing
PP	-	Patriarchs and Prophets
PK	-	Prophets and Kings
SG	-	Spiritual Gifts
SM	-	Selected Messages
SP	-	Spirit of Prophecy
Test.	-	Testimonies

Article citations:

RH	-	Review & Herald
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# Note From the Publisher

Within the Seventh-day Adventist community of believers in Jesus as the Messiah, Ellen G. White enjoys a privileged position as one upon whom God bestowed the gift of prophecy --one of the several gifts of the Spirit enumerated by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthian believers (1 Cor. chapter 12). While such Adventist belief should pose no particular problem to any Christian who accepts Paul's statements at face value, the fact remains that the nature and scope of Ellen G. White's gift remains the object of continuous study within the Seventh-day Adventist church.\*

Whether or not --or to what extent-- one believes that God's Spirit guided this very prolific nineteenth-century writer as a spiritual leader of the then fledgeling Adventist movement, it is a well recognized historical reality that without the guidance provided by her counsel, the phenomenal growth the Seventh-day Adventist church has experienced over the years could hardly be imagined.

Prophet or not --by whatever definition of the term-- her influence has been, and continues to be, one that reaches out beyond mere denominational boundaries. One of her books in particular, Steps to Christ, has over the years since its first edition in 1908 found a place in the library shelves, as well as in the hearts, of millions of Christians of every denomination --with copies sold and distributed in practically every modern language, including even some dialects.

The charge that Ellen G. White's writings contain several anti-Semitic statements, made by the late Yona Malachy (American Fundamentalism and Israel, Jerusalem, 1978) --or that at best she was insensitive to the role of Jews under the gospel "dispensation"-- true only when both literary and cultural contexts are ignored, has troubled believers with a Jewish background as well as the growing number of gentile Christians attuned to God's eternal plan for the Jewish people. They, more than anyone else, will welcome this booklet by Dr. Doukhan.

Through a careful and rigorous contextual analysis of her writings, the author is able to show that not only was Ellen G. White sensitive to the role of Jews in "latter day events" --she predicted a time when Jews will accept belief in Jesus as the Messiah paralleling the experience at Pentecost reported in Acts 2 (see p. )-- she carefully distinguished between the role and fate of the leaders and of the Jewish people in Jesus' own treatment of the subject. Even today many Christian writers fail to make such differentiation.

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\*For those unfamiliar with the current SDA position on this point, we have included a statement released by the denomination and published in the February, 1983 issue of "Ministry.", which appears in the Appendix.

No one is more qualified than Dr. Doukhan to write such a critical analysis as is here provided. Born in Algeria of a Sephardic family and educated in traditional Judaism --he attended all traditional Jewish schools from the age of five-- the young Jacques accepted Jesus as the Messiah and underwent baptism at the age of 18. In 1973 he received a Ph.D. in Hebrew and Jewish studies from the University of Strasbourg (France). Subsequently he did postdoctoral work at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and later (1977) was awarded the doctorate in theology (Th.D.) at Andrews University where he is now Professor of Old Testament in the Theological Seminary. Prior to his present position Dr. Doukhan has also pastored a congregation in France, was Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at Séminaire Adventiste du Salève (France), and more recently was President of Indian Ocean Seminary in the Island of Mauritius.

We are glad to add Dr. Doukhan's contribution to our list of publications, hoping it will help the reader gain greater awareness of God's wonderful plans for the descendants of Abraham as we approach the glorious event of the coming of Messiah.

## INTRODUCTION

### PROBLEMS AND METHODS

It is significant that works which have been done on E.G. White's writings about the Jewish question have been mainly concerned with the "conversion"<sup>1</sup>--as if anxious to come to the conclusion, one passed over the preceding steps. As a matter of fact, the conversion must follow a preliminary preparation and is mainly conditioned by it. Indeed, this concern for the conversion is the expression of the will of God. Yet we wonder if it does not sometimes disguise, in an unconscious way, a desire to overlook the most important thing which is here involved, namely the resolution of the Jewish problem in our own mind. That must stand before any regard toward conversion.

The total absence of any work on this problem and the awareness of its necessity has therefore brought us to give attention to these generally neglected aspects.

We will not be content to merely gather all the passages in a somehow classified manner; we too often use E.G. White as a "proof-text" without taking into account what she meant exactly. Yet the more we have a high regard for her writings, the more we feel the requirement to understand it --hence to do a careful exegesis of her words.

Our study is therefore more a kind of reflective and exegetical essay about the theology of E.G. White on the Jewish problem than a mere anthology of texts which would offer to the reader passages he/she will select and use according to his/her own need or feelings.

Our purpose is rather to point to the controverted questions and thus come to a more nuanced understanding, interpretation and use of E.G. White's writings as regards the Jewish question.

It appears that in E.G. White's writings the Jewish problem is treated in relation to three main topics which are closely dependent on each other --namely the crucifixion, the rejection, the conversion. Our approach to these writings will therefore follow this structure and will --as far as it is possible-- take into account the philological considerations in an attempt to grasp the thought and the intent of E.G. White, in order to avoid not only misunderstanding but also non schematization which is no less dangerous.

## NOTE TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. The principal works gathered by the White Research Center are the following: Counsels on Work for the Jews (from Writings of E.G. White), Home missionary Leaflet No. 29; D.A. Delafield, Our duty toward the Jews (Manuscript Release No. 399. D 735); How to Approach our Jewish Friends, Lay Activities Leaflet (No. 20. D 735); Jon Paulien, Ellen White and Jewish Evangelism (June 1974); Milton L. Perry, Winning Jews to Jesus: A consideration of methodology (for the course Problems in Evangelism, Nov. 1974); W.E. Read, Counsel from the Spirit of Prophecy Concerning the Jewish Work (March 1955); D.E. Robinson, To the Jew First (D 735); What Ellen G. White says about Work for the Jewish People, prepared by North American Missions Committee, General Conference of SDA (Revised, 1976); Work Among the Jews (Manuscript Release No. 313. D 735).

## CHAPTER I

### THE CRIME OF THE JEWS

The thought of E.G. White with regards to the drama of the crucifixion is articulated around three fundamental points which generate each other:

1. She stresses the responsibility of the Jewish leaders.
2. She uses the term "nation" to designate the Jewish leaders and so makes a clear distinction between nation and the Jewish people.
3. Consequently she has a specific understanding of the curse.

#### The Responsibility of the Jewish Leaders

The sin of the priest and rulers was greater than that of any preceding generation. By their rejection of the Saviour, they were making themselves responsible for the blood of all the righteous men slain from Abel to Christ. (DA 618-9)

The term "responsibility" is clearly used here in relation to the priests and rulers. Moreover, her language here is specially significant. The priests and rulers are placed in the same line as "any preceding generation ... from Abel." Priests and rulers do not belong to Israel but to the category of those who slay the righteous, including the generations before Israel. This is not the same as the classical Manicheist expression, "wicked Jews facing Christ," but "wicked men facing Christ." This is so true that she even identifies the Jewish leaders with today's professed followers of Christ.

Shall the warnings of God be passed by unheeded? Shall the opportunities for service be unimproved? Shall the world's scorn, the pride of reason, conformity to human customs and traditions, hold the professed followers of Christ from service to him? Will they reject God's word as the Jewish leaders rejected Christ? (COL 306, emphasis supplied)

The following statement also stresses that it is the Jewish leaders who are regarded as those who alone are involved in the crucifixion:

The Jewish rulers did not love God; therefore they cut themselves away from Him, and rejected all His overtures for a just settlement. Christ, the Beloved of God, came to assert the claims of the Owner of

the vineyard; but the husbandmen treated Him with marked contempt, saying, We will not have this man to rule over us. They envied Christ's beauty of character. His manner of teaching was far superior to theirs, and they dreaded His success. He remonstrated with them, unveiling their hypocrisy, and showing them the sure results of their course of action. This stirred them to madness. They smarted under the rebukes they could not silence. They hated the high standard of righteousness which Christ continually presented. They saw His teaching was placing them where their selfishness would be uncloaked, and they determined to kill Him. They hated His example of truthfulness and piety and the elevated spirituality revealed in all He did. His whole life was a reproof to their selfishness, and when the final test came, the test which meant obedience unto eternal life or disobedience unto eternal death, they rejected the Holy One of Israel. When they were asked to choose between Christ and Barabbas, they cried out, "Release unto us Barabbas!" Luke 23:18. And when Pilate asked, "What shall I do then with Jesus?" They cried fiercely, "let Him be crucified." Matt. 27:22. "Shall I crucify your King?" Pilate asked, and from the priests and rulers came the answer, "We have no king but Caesar." John 19:15. (COL 293-294).

Yet the next sentence refers to the "ignorant mob," besides the Jewish leaders, which cries "His blood be on us and on our children." But the immediately following sentence specified "Thus the Jewish leaders made their choice" as if after all they remained alone in the culpability. The mob is seen by E.G. White as "ignorant," which agrees with the latest historical works on the question. The mob is not merely ignorant on a spiritual level, it is also ignorant on a real historical level; they were simply not informed.<sup>1</sup>

As Christ sought to place truth before the people in its proper relation to their salvation, Satan worked through the Jewish leaders, and inspired them with enmity against the Redeemer of the World. They determined to do all in their power to prevent Him from making an impression upon the people. (RH 67.7, emphasis supplied)

We may notice here also the distinction she makes between the Jewish leaders and the people. Two camps can be perceived: Christ and the people on one side, and Satan and the Jewish leaders on the other side.

The same distinction may be perceived in another passage, through a subtlety of language:

And although My people would not come to Me that they might have life, although priests and rulers have done unto Me as they listed, although they have rejected Me, they shall have still another opportunity of accepting the Son of God. (AA 27, emphasis supplied)

With regards to the people which is related to God with the pronoun "My," the verb "would (not) come" can be taken in a conditional or subjunctive sense; with regard to the priests and rulers, the perfect is used, "have done," "have rejected me." The people are still the people of God; they still have a chance. Here is an opened door for them, while for the priests and rulers "they have already done" --there is no more chance for them. Therefore we read the next sentence as referring to "My people" and not to "priests and rulers":

You have seen that all who come to Me confessing their sins, I freely receive. Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. To you, My disciples, I commit this message of mercy. (AA 27,28)

The Jewish leaders are responsible for the crucifixion, but they must be distinguished from the Jewish people.

#### The Concept of Nation

Moreover, E.G. White uses also the expression "Jewish nation" in the same negative sense for the Jewish leaders.

I saw that God has forsaken the Jews as a nation; but that individuals among them will yet be converted ...They will receive Jesus as the Saviour of the World, and see the great sin of their nation in rejecting and crucifying Him." (SG 79, emphasis supplied)

Such passages have often been interpreted as referring to the whole people. It is indeed of importance to understand this concept in the way E.G. White uses it. In fact, the term nation is a synonym for the Jewish leaders.

'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets..'  
This was the most solemn denunciation ever uttered against Jerusalem. After denouncing the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders, who while they worshiped the temple, were working with a hatred inspired by Satan to destroy the only One who made the temple sacred...

Thus with power and Authority our Lord reproved the Jewish nation 'ye shall not see me henceforth,' (RH 75.50, Dec 13, 1898)

In the son who said 'I go, sir' and went not, the

character of the Pharisees was revealed. Like this son, the Jewish leaders were impenitent and self-sufficient. The religious life of the Jewish nation had become a pretense...

Had the conversion of the Jews been genuine, they would have received this testimony of John and accepted Jesus as the Messiah, the One to whom all their sacrificial offerings pointed, and who was the foundation of all their economy. (RH 77.8. Feb.20,1900, p. 13, emphasis supplied)

and immediately after she again makes her meaning precise.

And the Pharisees and the Sadducees did not produce the fruits of repentance and sanctification and righteousness. They were of the class who said, 'I go Sir' but went not. (Id., emphasis supplied)

The identification of the Jewish nation with the Jewish leaders comes out as she distinguishes clearly the people from the nation and the Jewish leaders.

As He neared the time of separation from His disciples, His teaching became more significant and mysterious to their minds. He presented Himself before the people as the bread of life. The multitude were impressed with His teaching, large crowds followed Him, and precious rays of light were shed upon them; but the disciples no longer held to the hope that the Jews, as a nation, would receive Christ. (RH 76.4. Jan. 24, 1899, p.50)

When Christ came to speak the words of life, the common people heard Him gladly; and many, even of the priests and rulers, believed in Him. But the chief of the priesthood and the leading men of the nation were determined to condemn and repudiate His teachings... It was the influence of such teachers that led the Jewish nation to reject their Redeemer. (RH 83.23)

As E.G. White used the expression "Jewish nation," she meant the Jewish leaders, the government, and not the Jews as a people. This concept is already underlined as E.G. White speaks about Israel at the beginning of the covenant.

Israel was now to be taken into a close and peculiar relation to the Most High --to be incorporated as a church and a nation under the government of God." (PP 303, emphasis supplied)

The notion of the community --the people-- is expressed in the

word "Church" distinguished from that of "nation," which is related to the idea of government.

Besides this, it is significant that in later versions of some passages the expression "race of the Jews" has been changed to "Jewish nation."<sup>2</sup> That the expression "race of Jews" has been corrected into "Jewish nation," shows at least that a real difference of nuance has to be understood between the two expressions. And that the correction has been judged as necessary, attests to the importance of that nuance. Yet the problem is not so simple, for E.G. White uses often the general term "Jews" as synonymous of Jewish nation.

Had the conversion of the Jews been genuine, they would have received this testimony of John and accepted Jesus as the Messiah, the One to whom all their sacrificial offerings pointed, and who was the foundation of all their economy. But the Pharisees and the Saducees did not produce the fruits of repentance and sanctification and righteousness. They were of the class who said, 'I go Sir' but went not. (RH 77.9. Feb. 20, 1900, emphasis supplied)

It is clear here, however, that the term "Jews" as it is used in the first sentence is the exact equivalent of "the Pharisees and the Sadducees" of the second sentence. It is the same for the following passages where the term "Scribes and Pharisees" is used distinctively from "the people" (other Jews); they are also designated as "the Jews."

'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees hypocrites...' These fearful denunciations were made upon the Jews, because, while teaching the law of God to the people, they were not doers of the word. (RH 76.35. Aug. 29, 1899, p.550)

This contradictory situation is not new, for we find the same linguistic phenomenon in John's writings which had a strong influence upon E.G. White's theology and language. Therefore the same thing may be said for E.G. White that has been noticed in the gospel of John, that the author used the term "Jews" not in an ethnic sense but may also designate those who have been the first initiators of the crucifixion, those who have absolutely rejected Him, namely the inhabitants of Jerusalem, of Judah.<sup>3</sup>

This meaning of the term "Jew" was thus extended in John as in E.G. White to a general designation of those who rejected Christ including those from the people, and became a principle of evil, the darkness, a symbol which had henceforth nothing more to do with the ethnic reality. In order for us to be aware of this, it is enough to keep in mind the simple fact that Christians --including John himself-- were all Jews.

Informed of this convention of language, we may now deal with the delicate question of the curse.

### The Curse

Commenting on the parable of the Lord's Vineyard, E.G. White is led to think about the curse. In fact, she does not use that exact term, but she deals with the notion as she speaks about the doom which would come upon the Jews.

In the parable of the vineyard, after Christ had portrayed before the priests their crowning act of wickedness...Unwittingly they had pronounced their own doom... Christ would have averted the doom of the Jewish nation if the people had received Him. But envy and jealousy made them implacable... The doom foretold came upon the Jewish nation. (COL 294-5)

This passage follows immediately a paragraph which was concerned with the Jewish leaders, the priests and rulers. There is no doubt that it is still concerned with the same class of people. The word priests occurs in our passage with the technical expression "Jewish nation." Moreover, the allusion to the envy and the jealousy of this group shows that the priests and the rulers ("the nation") are here meant.<sup>4</sup>

Thus it would be difficult to draw from this passage the conclusion that the Jews as such would be cursed.

The main passage which is directly concerned with the curse and which is often referred to as evidence of a continuing actuality of the alleged curse upon the Jews is found in Early Writings.

The Jews who first aroused the rage of the heathen against Jesus, were not to escape unpunished. In the judgment hall, as Pilate hesitated to condemn Jesus, the infuriated Jews cried, "His blood be on us, and on our children." The fulfillment of this terrible curse which they called down upon their own heads, the Jewish nation experienced. The heathen and those called Christians alike have been their foes. Those professed Christians, in their zeal for Christ whom the Jews crucified, thought that the more suffering they could bring upon them, the better would God be pleased. Many of the unbelieving Jews were therefore killed, while others were driven from place to place, and were punished in almost every manner. The blood of Christ and of the disciples whom they had put to death was upon them, and they were visited with terrible judgments. The curse of God followed them, and they were a by-word and a

derision to the heathen and to so-called Christians. They were degraded, shunned, and detested, as if the brand of Cain were upon them. Yet I saw that God had marvelously preserved this people, and scattered them over the world that they might be looked upon as specially visited by the curse of God. I saw that God had forsaken the Jews as a nation; but that individuals among them will yet be converted... will receive Jesus as the Saviour of the World, and see the great sin of their nation in rejecting Jesus and crucifying Him. (EW 212-3, emphasis supplied)

It is undoubtedly a difficult passage; it is one of those which received most of the corrections in a second version.<sup>5</sup> That is significant already of the complexity of the problem and of the difficulty for the author to have found an adequate expression. We must therefore give it our closest attention.

First, the context of this passage reveals that it is concerned with the Jewish nation, the Jewish leaders. In addition to this, the expression "nation" is used twice in our text. The passage starts with reference to the Jews who "where not to escape unpunished"... and who cried "His blood be on us and on our children." The next sentence explains with whom this curse is concerned: "The fulfillment of this terrible curse which they called down upon their own heads, the Jewish nation experienced." So the curse concerns the Jewish nation. Moreover, the end of our passage provides the specific sense of "curse" in relation to God: "I saw that God has forsaken the Jews as a nation." The curse, namely, the forsaken on the part of God, has nothing to do with the Jews themselves as Jews, for they are forsaken only as a nation. It is only the "kratos" aspect which is here concerned.

As for the suffering the Jews endured, it has nothing to do with God. The language of E.G. White here is particularly expressive in this sense. God is used as the subject in two cases: "God has forsaken the Jews as a nation" and "God had marvelously preserved this people and scattered them over the world." Never is the suffering of the Jews regarded as a direct action of God. On the contrary, this suffering is caused by the enemies of God.

The heathen, and those called Christians alike have been their foes. Those professed Christians in their zeal for Christ whom the Jews crucified, thought that the more suffering they could bring upon them, the better would God be pleased...they might be looked upon as specially visited by the curse of God.

The problem lies in fact on the level of human interpretation of the alleged curse of God. Men only gave to the curse the size it took --as an explanation of their own hatred-- to confer upon their own deeds the seal of "divine" justification. To say and to think

that God sent the suffering against the Jews will result in a terrible implication for our conception of God and amount to the same as saying that God is Himself the author of Evil. But on this, E.G. White makes clearly the point: "Sickness, suffering, and death are work of an antagonistic power. Satan is the destroyer; God is the restorer." (MH 113)

In other words, to say and to think that the sufferings of the Jews or of others come as a result of a divine malediction means that we blame God as being responsible.

Another important passage must be considered since it is explicitly concerned with the question of the curse, as a perpetual thing until the end, the day of judgment; we find it in the Desire of Ages. It is also a classical reference text.

Looking upon the smitten Lamb of God, the Jews had cried, 'His blood be on us, and on our children.' That awful cry ascended to the throne of God. That sentence, pronounced upon themselves, was written in heaven. That prayer was heard. The blood of the son of God was upon their children and their children's children, a perpetual curse. (DA 739)

This is indeed a very strong statement which needs a careful reading. Let us first notice that here also the text is concerned with the Jews as a nation. Already in the preceding paragraph it was said, "Satan was their leader. As a nation they would act out his dictation." Then following this statement, E.G. White goes on and gives to this curse three applications which lie again at the level of the nation.

1. It has been "realized in the destruction of Jerusalem."
2. "Terribly has it been manifested in the condition of the Jewish nation for eighteen hundred years...From land to land throughout the world, from century to century..."
3. Finally, "that prayer will be fulfilled in the great judgment day." And here are explicitly involved the priests and rulers:

The priests and rulers will behold again the scene in the judgment hall. Every circumstance will appear before them, as if written in letters of fire. Then those who prayed, "His blood be on us, and our children" will receive the answer "to their prayer."

The first application is concerned with the place of the nation —Jerusalem. The second application is concerned with the condition of the nation. The words point to the diaspora element —there is no more theocracy. The third application is concerned with those who brought about the situation --those first responsible-- the rulers and the priests.

All the applications point to the nation element. We have seen already that the term "nation" expressed the political aspect and not the ethnic one. We have to understand the notion of the rejection from this standpoint.

1. The latest results of scholarly work have shown that most of the people present were from the Diaspora and therefore were not informed of the real situation. Cf. Jacques Doukhan, Drinking at the Sources (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1981), pp. 85-93 [English translation from the French original, Boire aux Sources, Paris, Signes des Temps, 1977].

E.G. White says clearly that "Peter urged home upon the convicted people the fact that they had rejected Christ because they had been deceived by the priests and rulers." (SR 246). The rejection of Christ by the people was done because they had been deceived, hence in ignorance.

2. Cf. Spiritual Gifts I, p. 106, "race of the Jews" and the same text in EW 212 with "Jewish nation." At any rate, she uses the term "as a nation" in the following lines (SP I, 107) which clarifies already in what sense the word race had to be understood.
3. F. Lovsky, La déchirure de l'absence (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1971), pp. 303-5; J. Isaac, Jésus et Israël (Paris: Albin Michel, 1948), pp. 192ff.); see also James Montgomery Boice, The Gospel of John (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), p. 14: "Generally the term is used critically of those religious leaders who opposed Christ and the Gospel. Thus John clearly distinguishes between the Galileans, who were Jewish in the ethnic sense, but whom he does not call Jews, and the Jews of Jerusalem. Moreover, even in regard to Jerusalem he distinguishes between the leaders, whom he terms Jews, and others."\*
4. Cf. Mk. 15:10; Mt. 27:18.
5. Here we find the shifting of "race of Jews" into "Jewish nation."

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\*emphasis supplied

THE REJECTION OF THE JEWS

Ellen G. White's thought about the rejection of the Jews is very nuanced. Sometimes she gives the impression that the Jews are not rejected.

Even though Israel rejected His son, God did not reject them. (AA 375)

Yet she specifies some lines below:

Through unbelief and the rejection of Heaven's purpose for Her, Israel as a nation had lost her connection with God. (AA 377)

Here the two aspects of Israel are expressed --Israel as a people which is not rejected; Israel as a nation which is rejected. What does that mean? The following passage seems to provide the key to this concept.

Then said the angel, 'He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week --seven years.' For seven years after the Saviour entered on His ministry, the Gospel was to be preached especially to the Jews; for three and a half years by Christ Himself; and afterward by the apostles...The one week --seven years-- ended in A.D. 34. Then by the stoning of Stephen the Jews finally sealed their rejection of the Gospel; the disciples who were scattered abroad by persecution 'went everywhere preaching the word' (Acts 8:4); and shortly after, Saul the persecutor was converted, and became Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. (DA 233)

Up to that time, "the Gospel was to be preached especially to the Jews," because the purpose was to make of them a theocracy, a nation which would be exclusively ruled by God. After the stoning of Stephen the Jews sealed their rejection of the Gospel. That does not mean that the Jews were rejected --otherwise how to explain that shortly after, Saul the persecutor was converted?" The only change is that henceforth the Gospel was also addressed to the Gentiles and not only especially to the Jews; this does not mean that henceforth the Jews were rejected.

As a matter of fact, E.G. White never speaks of the rejection of the Jews only because of their belonging to the Jewish people --as Jews. On the contrary:

The parable of the unfruitful tree represented God's dealings with the Jewish nation. The command had gone forth, cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? But divine mercy had spared it yet a little longer. There were still many among the Jews who were ignorant of the character and work of Christ. And the children had not enjoyed the opportunities or received the light which their parents had spurned. Through the preaching of the apostles and their associates, God would cause light to shine upon them; they would be permitted to see how prophecy had been fulfilled not only in the birth and life of Christ, but in His death and resurrection. The children were not condemned for the sins of the parents; but when, with a knowledge of all the light given to their parents, the children rejected the additional light granted to themselves, they became partakers of their parents' sins, and filled up the measure of their iniquity. (GC 27-28, emphasis supplied)

The context of this passage reveals that it is concerned with the Jewish rulers. The "Jewish leaders" are explicitly mentioned in the preceding paragraph (p.27) as well as in the paragraph which follows it with the expression "the rulers of the people" (p.28). Moreover, in our passage the expression "Jewish nation" is used in connection with the cutting off.

We must here notice that "the children were not condemned for the sins of the parents"; the curse is not effective upon them as long as a "knowledge of all the light" is not presented to them. In other words, the children of those who crucified Christ --and by extension all the Jews-- are not rejected, are not under the curse, as long as the Christian message in its whole light is not presented to them.

The question then arises: Had the Christian message been indeed presented to the Jews in "all the light"? What about the Christian apostasy with regards to the Law? Here E.G. White is categorical. She makes even a significant parallelism between the rejection of Christ by the Jewish rulers and the rejection of the Law by the Christians.

When the Jews rejected Christ they rejected the foundation of their faith. And, on the other hand, the Christian world of today who claim faith in Christ, but reject the law of God, are making a mistake similar to that of the deceived Jews. (SM 1.229)

It is also significant that she uses the same technical term "the great sin" to designate both the rejection of Christ by the Jews and

the rejection of the Law by the Christians. For her, Christ is the law, its Author,<sup>1</sup> and in rejecting the one, the other is rejected too.

The Christian Church, on the other hand, who profess the utmost faith in Christ, in despising the Jewish system virtually deny Christ, who was the originator of the entire Jewish economy.<sup>2</sup> (SM 1.232)

Thus since the truth has not yet been presented to the Jews in its "full light," it follows that as a whole the Jews have not yet been rejected. E. G. White underlines this idea as she comments on the book of Hosea.

Until the end of time, they were to be "wanderers among the nations." But through Hosea was given a prophecy that set before them the privilege of having a part in the final restoration that is to be made to the people of God at the close of earth's history, when Christ shall appear as King of kings and Lord of lords. 'Many days' the prophet declared, the ten tribes were to abide 'without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim.' 'Afterward,' the prophet continued, 'shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days.'

In symbolic language Hosea set before the ten tribes God's plan of restoring to every penitent soul who would unite with His church on earth, the blessings granted Israel in the days of their loyalty to Him in the promised land. Referring to Israel as one to whom He longed to show mercy, the Lord declared, 'I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi [My husband]; and shalt call me no more Baali [My Lord]. For I will take away the name of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.' (PK 298,9)

Interpreting the prophecy of Hosea regarding the ten tribes, E.G. White understands the prophecy of Hosea in "symbolic language" and she specifies that the Lord is here "Referring to Israel as one to whom He longed to show mercy." The ten tribes symbolize here

the situation of the Jewish people to whom the Gospel has not yet been "presented in its fullness,"<sup>3</sup> who stands in the meantime for "many days" abiding "without a king, and without a prince [the nation aspect], and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim" [the theocratic aspect].

Thus ethnic Israel —"the ten tribes"— is perceived by E.G. White with a kind of expectation. There is still a chance for many Jews to become again the bride of God, after these years of widowhood, to rejoin the ranks of the people of God. Here comes the problem of the conversion.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. Cf. DA 307.
2. The following paragraph (p. 233) makes clear what she meant by the expression "the Jewish economy." "I am asked concerning the law in Galatians. What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? I answer both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments. Christ was the foundation of the whole Jewish economy." (emphasis supplied).
3. Cf. AA 380.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CONVERSION OF THE JEWS

The conversion of the Jews is described by E.G. White real event from an objective point of view and is analyzed process from a subjective point of view.

#### The Objective Viewpoint

Evangelism among the Jews has three facets.

#### The work among the Jews has been neglected

There is to be true, sincere missionary work done for the Jews. A little is being done, but it is as nothing compared with what might be done. There is a decided failure to take hold of this work as we ought. Let the people of the Lord meditate and pray over this matter. (Letter 42, 1912)

Among Christian ministers there are only a few who feel called upon to labor for the Jewish people. (AA 380-81)

His servants labor in faith for those who have long been neglected and despised. (AA 381)

It has been a strange thing to me that there were so few who felt a burden to labor for the Jewish people, who are scattered throughout so many lands. (Letter 47, 1903 [Evangelism 578])

#### The Conversion of the Jews shall take place at the end of time

In the closing proclamation of the gospel, when special work is to be done for classes of people hitherto neglected, God expects His messengers to take particular interest in the Jewish people whom they find in all parts of the earth. (AA 381)

The work of which the prophet Zechariah writes is a type of the spiritual restoration to be wrought for Israel before the end of time. (Letter 42, 1912)

Until the end of time, they were to be "wanderers among the nations." But through Hosea was given a

prophecy that set before them the privilege of having a part in the final restoration that is to be made to the people of God at the close of earth's history. (PK 298)

#### "Many" will be converted

The time is come when the Jews are to be given light. The Lord wants us to encourage and sustain men who shall labor in right lines for this people; for there are to be a multitude convinced of the truth, who will take their position for God. The time is coming when there will be as many converted in a day as there were on the day of Pentecost, after the disciples had received the Holy Spirit. (RH June 29, 1905)

There will be many converted from among the Jews... A nation shall be born in a day. (Evangelism 578)

There are among the Jews many who will be converted, and through whom we shall see the salvation of God go forth as a lamp that burneth. There are Jews everywhere, and to them the light of present truth is to be brought. There are among them many who will come to the light, and who will proclaim the immutability of the law of God with wonderful power. (Evangelism 578)

Many of the Jewish people will by faith receive Christ as their redeemer. (Evangelism 579)

#### The Subjective Viewpoint

Here E.G. White describes the process in which Jews will be led to conversion in two stages —a stage of preparation and a stage of action.

##### The stage of preparation

This part of the work is depicted in terms of conditions to be fulfilled by the people of God.

It requires awareness in the people of God of their responsibility regarding this mission.

In the closing proclamation of the gospel...God expects His messengers to take particular interest in the Jewish people who they find in all parts of the earth. (AA 381)

There are Jews everywhere, and to them the light of present truth is to be brought. (Evangelism 578)

It requires special wisdom.

The work for the Jews, as outlined in the eleventh chapter of Romans, is a work that is to be treated with special wisdom. (SDA Bible Commentary, Ellen G. White Comments, on Romans 11, p. 1079)

Great wisdom should be used in the presentation of a truth that comes directly in opposition to the opinions and practices of the people. (Evangelism 246)

Our ministers need more of the wisdom that Paul had. (Evangelism 141)

The stage of action

This part of the work is described in terms of a prediction.

The work will be done by converted Jews.

The Jews are to be a power to labor for the Jews; and we are to see the salvation of God. (RH June 29, 1905)

Converted Jews are to have an important part to act in the great preparations to be made in the future to receive Christ, our Prince. A nation shall be born in a day. How? By men whom God has appointed, being converted to the truth. (Manuscript 75, 1905 [Evangelism 579])

There are among the Jews many who will be converted and through whom we shall see the salvation of God<sup>1</sup> go forth as a lamp that burneth. (Manuscript 87, 1907 [Evangelism 578])

The work will be performed by God Himself

There are among them many who will come to the light ...The Lord God will work. He will do wonderful things in righteousness. (Evangelism 578)

Among the Jews are some who, like Saul of Tarsus, are mighty in the Scriptures, and these will proclaim with wonderful power the immutability of the law of God. The God of Israel will bring this to pass in our day. His arm is not shortened that it cannot save. (AA 381)

We should mention here the word E.G. White apparently gave in answer to a question of her son asking about the means we should use for the conversion of the Jews.

I saw the literature scattered everywhere among the Jews, and when the pinch comes, God will move upon His messengers to gather in an abundant harvest.<sup>2</sup>

Although this work might be only "oral tradition," it appears to fit the basic thought of E.G. White: "God will take especially this work<sup>3</sup> in hand." This work is perceived as taking place in two steps. The first would be a phase of preparation in the people of God which is exhorted to become aware of the importance of this mission and to bring the light to the Jews, with a special wisdom. The second "will" be a phase of action which will be performed mainly by converted Jews and by God Himself upon the basis of the preceding preparation and of the scattered literature.

The question arises now whether the second stage depends on the first or not. It seems it does. The reproaches and the reflections of E.G. White relating to the painful experiences of Marcus Lichtenstein are in this sense significant and particularly relevant in this concern.

In a most remarkable manner, the Lord wrought upon the heart of Marcus Lichtenstein, and directed the course of this young man to Battle Creek, that he might there be brought under the influence of the truth, and be converted; that he might obtain an experience and be united to the Office of publication. His education in the Jewish religion would have qualified him to prepare publications. His knowledge of Hebrew would have been a help to the Office in the preparation of publications through which access could be gained to a class that otherwise could not be reached. It was no inferior gift that God gave to the Office in Marcus. His deportment and conscientiousness were in accordance with the principles of the wonderful truths he was beginning to see and appreciate. But the influence of some in the Office grieved and discouraged Marcus. Those young men who did not esteem him as he deserved, were the means that Satan used to separate from the Office the gift which God had given to it. He went away perplexed, grieved, discouraged. Those who had had years of experience, and who should have had the love of Christ in their hearts, were so far separated from God by selfishness, pride, and their own folly, that they could not discern the special work of God in connecting Marcus with the Office.

If those who are connected with the Office had been awake, and not spiritually paralyzed, Bro. I would long ago have been connected with the Office, and might now be prepared to do a good work which much needs to be done. He should have been engaged in teaching young men and women, that they might now be qualified to become workers in missionary fields.

Those engaged in the work have been about two-thirds dead because of yielding to wrong influences. They have been where God could not impress them by His Holy Spirit. And oh, how my heart aches as I see that so much time has passed, and that the great work that might have been done is left undone because those in important positions have not walked in the light. (Test. 3, p. 205-6, emphasis supplied)

The unpreparation of the people of God, their unfaithfulness, has been a real obstacle to the realization of this work. The latter was conditioned by the former. On the other hand E.G. White has also seen the certainty of this work as an intervention from above without any preliminary conditions from below.

The Lord God will work. He will do wonderful things in righteousness...the predictions of prophecy will be fulfilled. (Evangelism 578-9)

The nature of dependence between the two phrases is therefore not clear. At any rate they are often associated in E.G. White's writings and this mere fact is a matter worthy of our thinking.

### NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. The expression is used elsewhere to designate the conversion of the Jews (cf. preceding quotation).
2. Reported by S.A. Kaplan in "Report of the Jewish Work"; found in the White Estate in the folder labeled DF 35.
3. It is to us one of the main truths in Romans 11.

## CONCLUSION

### REFLECTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

As one seeks to understand the "Jewish problem" from E.G. White's writings, two things are to be taken into consideration: her language and the way we interpret it, namely the exegesis. Upon the basis of those two elements shall we progress towards a new Seventh-day Adventist theology of the Church-Israel dialectic.

#### The Jewish Problem

The theology of E.G. White seems to us to be articulated around three motifs. The crucifixion and hence the curse have nothing to do with the Jews as Jews; it concerns the Jewish nation --that is, the rulers of this people at the time of the first century, who have to be distinguished from the people proper.

The concept of nation expresses the political aspect of Israel. And we come here to the second motif: the rejection. Israel has been forsaken by God as a political system. God is no more the king of Israel, the one who leads them to the war or to the peace. The suffering of the Jews has not to be interpreted as the result of the divine curse. In fact, forsaking of the Jews as a nation, that is the curse. What follows --that is, the persecution, the suffering, etc.-- has come because of the particular situation of the Jews being no more "governed" by God, and is only the action of men associated with the enemy of God. The human foulness is enough; let us be careful not to involve God.

As a matter of fact, E.G. White points out that those Christians who brought suffering upon the Jews, thinking that they would please God, were merely "professed" Christians, and were wrong in their thought. In fact, they made a false interpretation of the Word of God on the basis of their hate, in order to justify it.

On the other hand, if the suffering of the Jews is to be interpreted as the curse of God because their ancestors crucified Christ, what should we do with those converted Jews who also take their part of suffering and despise? What should we do with all those Jews to whom the truth has never been presented, or if it was, it was presented in a wrong way?

Here E.G. White is very clear. To her, the curse is only effective upon those to whom the truth has been presented in its "fullest" light and who reject it. During centuries this could not be the case because of the rejection of the law by the official Church

who had thereby rejected Christ himself. We may understand now why E.G. White is led to compare this Israel to the ten tribes who shall "abide many days...without a king...and ephod, etc." as the widow of God...yet the not rejected wife of God --expecting the time of the end. Then she shall "return and seek the Lord their God and David their king."

It is significant that here, E.G. White uses again the term of "nation": "A nation shall be born in a day," suggesting by this kind of restoration of the lost feature. But this conversion is seen by E.G. White as a difficult performance which should progress in two stages, the stage of action following the one of preparation.

Yet the way each phase is pointed out in her language is rather disconcerting. The first is expressed in terms of exhortation, of the desire of God though not as one actual event, while the second is described as sure "prediction of prophecy [which] will be fulfilled." (Evangelism 579). Two reasons might be given to explain this: either the second phase, that is, the actual conversion of the Jews is dependent upon the first, i.e. the response of the people of God to His appeal --so that the prophecy must be understood as conditional-- or the second phase will happen in spite of the people of God. As a matter of fact, whatever the alternative, it would emerge in a dramatic issue. The first would mean a frightening responsibility: if the people of God do not hear the divine exhortation, then the prophecy of the conversion of the Jews will not be fulfilled. The blood of Israel after the flesh will be on the head of Israel after the Spirit. The second would mean that the people of God as such, is in a sense questioned. Indeed if the will of God is fulfilled in spite of or independently of the people of God, what is then the meaning of "the people of God"? Having failed to do her mission we may wonder if the church will jeopardize her vocation as the people of God. In fact the two alternatives do not exclude each other...

#### Language and Exegesis

The texts of E.G. White on this very question are not always clear and often necessitate careful exegesis. The reason may be that the time had not come to deal seriously with this question. Thus E.G. White was concerned with the problem only incidentally as she was confronted for instance with converted Jews such as J.C. Gilbert or M. Lichtenstein. It is significant that she places the conversion of the Jews and the work for them chiefly in the future --at the end of time-- though she thought it was feasible at her time. As she was asked for a work in Jerusalem, she always answered negatively. It seems that the ground was not yet prepared for the performance of this work.

Besides all this, it is important to notice the modification of her language as we compare the last versions of a same text to

the earlier ones. That is one of the characteristics of the extraordinary humility of this servant who always sought to render the divine message in the best way she could. This readiness and the flexibility in the use of words, in her language, is for us particularly significant; it warns us against a too literal use of the words of E.G. White —the message is inspired —not the words. It suggests at the same time that today E.G. White would have expressed the same truth with other words on the basis of the sadness of history which gave to a number of words new semantic connotations.

It is true that some terms of E.G. White could generate misunderstanding as it is the case also with the Bible, even the Old Testament itself, when both are read with a mind encumbered with prejudices which originally did not exist in either the Bible or E.G. White's writing. And it often happens that Bible and E.G. White have been invoked to support our own prejudices. Therefore, E.G. White's writings and the Bible, have to be interpreted according to a sound exegesis.

To give here a complete picture of sound exegesis would bring us too far beyond the scope of our study. We shall confine ourselves to the limited frame of our concern.

With regards to the Jewish question, we should interpret the texts according to two basic principles. The first criterion lies in the text —that is the objective aspect: we must take into account the whole picture of the thought towards a synthesis-exegesis. The second criterion lies indeed in our personal relationship to the text and to the question we are concerned about in it —that is the subjective aspect. In other words, one who suspects the text of the spirit of prophecy is not able to extract from it the essential meaning, for the latter implies faith. Neither is he able to do a correct exegesis with regards to this very question, if he has and maintains, consciously or not, a degree of resentment towards the Jews.

Exegesis requires faith from the part of the interpreter towards the text he seeks —but it is not enough. By the same token, sound exegesis forbids the interpreter from any kind of hate regarding the people the text is talking about. It requires love. Both faith and love are necessary for the right interpretation of the word of God, for the discovery of the truth.

#### Towards a SDA Theology of the Dialectic Church-Israel

An element of rupture has been overlooked by our theologians: they are inclined to regard themselves as a mere "continuation" of the Reformation, for they feel more natural solidarity with the "Christian" Church than with the Jews. The main reason is that they come generally from the former stock and so it is difficult

for them to realize this rupture. It is true that there is an element of continuity in the fact that the Reformation is now complete with regards to the preceding one, and we have carried it forward. But they like to emphasize this aspect at the expense of the other one.

Indeed the rupture element brings us into solidarity with the Jews over against almost the whole Christian world. It is significant that the last steps of the Great Controversy are perceived by E.G. White as relating to the Sabbath. It is basically with regards to the Sabbath that E.G. White urges the people of God to come out of Babylon.

The Sabbath question is to be the issue in the great final conflict, in which all the world will act a part ...The great decision now to be made by everyone is, whether he will receive the mark of the beast and his image, or the seal of the living and true God. (ST March 22, 1910)

As God called the children of Israel out of Egypt, that they might keep His Sabbath, so He calls His people out of Babylon, that they might keep His Sabbath, that they may not worship the beast or his image. (RH Dec. 13, 1892)

Thus, theologically and historically the Sabbath separates us from the whole Christianity while at the same time it relates us to the Jews.

Theologically it implies a "new" reflection on the Law, and hence bears an essentially different conception of our relation with God. Our theologians have not yet, it seems to me, fully realized this in their concern to be regarded in the line of the traditional Christianity.

This concern has above all an evangelistic intention towards the other Christians; yet at the same time that we open the door on one side, it is closed on the other side, towards the Jews. Our theology is formulated to be heard by Christian ears only, but not by Jewish ones. We need a new language which will express this neglected aspect of our vocation.

On the other hand, this rupture because of the Sabbath has particular implications regarding our "historical" relationship with Jews. If the last persecution will indeed be concerned with the Sabbath question, then it will involve both believing Jews and Adventists. Thus, the movement of our historical destiny will also bring us in the last hours, whether we want it or not, towards the Jews, being even identified with them.

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The study of E.G. White's writings regarding the Jewish problem reveals a wonderful coherence of thought with a most acute lucidity in spite of some difficulties of the language; but at the same time it brings us to a certain feeling of pain: E.G. White uttered those words and counsels as long as a century ago —where do we stand now?

# The inspiration and authority of the Ellen G. White writings

*A statement of present understanding.*

In response to requests, a statement on the relationship of the writings of Ellen G. White to the Bible was prepared initially by an ad hoc committee of the General Conference. The statement was published in the July 15 *Adventist Review* and August issue of *Ministry* with an invitation to readers to respond to it. Suggestions from readers and from several groups have led to a refinement of the statement to its present form. Although it is not a voted statement, we believe that the worldwide participation in its development makes it a reflection of the views of the church on the topic it addresses.—Biblical Research Institute.

**I**n the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists at Dallas in April, 1980, the Preamble states: "Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures." Paragraph one reflects the church's understanding of the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, while paragraph seventeen reflects the church's understanding of the inspiration and authority of the writings of Ellen White in relation to the Scriptures. These paragraphs read as follows:

## "1. The Holy Scriptures

"The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history. (2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12.)"

## "17. The Gift of Prophecy

"One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is

prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. (Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14-21; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 12:17; 19:10.)"

The following affirmations and denials speak to the issues which have been raised about the inspiration and authority of the Ellen White writings and their relation to the Bible. These clarifications should be taken as a whole. They are an attempt to express the present understanding of Seventh-day Adventists. They are not to be construed as a substitute for, or a part of, the two doctrinal statements quoted above.

### Affirmations

1. We believe that Scripture is the divinely revealed Word of God and is inspired by the Holy Spirit.

2. We believe that the canon of Scripture is composed only of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments.

3. We believe that Scripture is the foundation of faith and the final authority in all matters of doctrine and practice.

4. We believe that Scripture is the Word of God in human language.

5. We believe that Scripture teaches that the gift of prophecy will be manifest in the Christian church after New Testament times.

6. We believe that the ministry and writings of Ellen White were a manifestation of the gift of prophecy.

7. We believe that Ellen White was inspired by the Holy Spirit and that her writings, the product of that inspiration, are applicable and authoritative, especially to Seventh-day Adventists.

8. We believe that the purposes of the Ellen White writings include guidance in understanding the teaching of Scripture and application of these teachings, with

prophetic urgency, to the spiritual and moral life.

9. We believe that the acceptance of the prophetic gift of Ellen White is important to the nurture and unity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

10. We believe that Ellen White's use of literary sources and assistants finds parallels in some of the writings of the Bible.

### Denials

1. We do not believe that the quality or degree of inspiration in the writings of Ellen White is different from that of Scripture.

2. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White are an addition to the canon of Sacred Scripture.

3. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White function as the foundation and final authority of Christian faith as does Scripture.

4. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White may be used as the basis of doctrine.

5. We do not believe that the study of the writings of Ellen White may be used to replace the study of Scripture.

6. We do not believe that Scripture can be understood only through the writings of Ellen White.

7. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White exhaust the meaning of Scripture.

8. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White are essential for the proclamation of the truths of Scripture to society at large.

9. We do not believe that the writings of Ellen White are the product of mere Christian piety.

10. We do not believe that Ellen White's use of literary sources and assistants negates the inspiration of her writings.

We conclude, therefore, that a correct understanding of the inspiration and authority of the writings of Ellen White will avoid two extremes: (1) regarding these writings as functioning on a canonical level identical with Scripture, or (2) considering them as ordinary Christian literature.